

March 6th, 2023

Written testimony submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Housing Committee in support of SB 4, *An Act Concerning Connecticut's Present and Future Housing Needs*.

My name is Jermaine Otis Woodard Jr, and I proudly reside in Hartford, Connecticut. I am a devoted member of Asylum Hill Congregational Church, and I serve as Baritone section-leader/soloist to the Sanctuary Choir. My congregation is a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA), a broad-based organization of 49 faith institutions working together on this issue.

I am testifying in support of a rent cap and in support of SB 4, and, in particular, the portion on rent caps with amendments to better protect tenants.

- • The cap should be lower—I suggest 3%. This tracks pre-pandemic average rent increases and would be affordable and predictable to tenants.
- It should cover apartments in between tenants so landlords can't push out tenants to increase the rent.
- It should expand good cause eviction protections to cover all tenants so they have greater stability in their homes.

I support this bill because it is the right and just thing to do, but it is also the smart thing to do for CT. So many of the people suffering massive rent increases are doing so at the hands of out-of-state investors and owners. Failing to address this crisis will not only hurt residents like myself who rent, but it will weaken our state. The economics of this matter can and will cause a ripple effect of irreparably damaging issues.

Aside from all of the inevitable, residual, harmful economical ramifications of rent increases, destabilization, evictions, homelessness, and displacement – my personal testimony directly aligns with my support of strongly considering and lowering rent caps for tenants. Simply put, my primary and supplemental wages can't keep up with a yearly-increasing rental payment while also juggling my daily bills and expenses. Though having the privilege of snagging *the* last relatively affordable loft at Parkville Lofts in May of 2018, my rent has seen an increase upwards of \$150 in a span of almost 5 years. I understand inflation and the economical warfare this country has seen as of late.....but damn.....this excessive increase cripplingly impairs some of us who are actually trying to obtain a livable wage while living within our means (which is not an easy feat hustling additional per-diem gigs every single week). Everyone's situation is vastly different, but too many of us share the same testimony. I, personally, would significantly benefit from a lowered rental cap AND affordable rental payment. At some point in my youth, economic hardship fractured my family, and I watched (and in some cases *continue* to watch) people I deeply love suffer and struggle, 'rob Peter to pay Paul', and repeat.....I'd strongly NOT prefer that reality in my adult years in the "greatest country in the world".

With grace from a concerned Hartfordite,

Jermaine Otis Woodard Jr.

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